

[June 19-22, 1949]

PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION

It is now generally recognized that individual freedom in America will result in the common good only through the proper education of all citizens. Moreover, it is generally agreed that in a democracy, education must be kept close to the people, free of political entanglements, and free from domination by any interests which might use it for selfish ends. To this end, our state governments must assume an increasing responsibility for the policies and the means of their educational systems.

The tools and methods of education have been rightly chosen as the background for discussion by the Governors' Conference. There is no state that does not face at least some of the current problems of administration, such as proper districting, financing, the teacher shortage, new construction of buildings, and the like. In South Carolina, a recently completed State School Survey shows that our State faces many of these problems.

However, in seeking to improve the means for education in this country, we cannot afford to forget for a moment the character of that education, and its role in our future. For this reason, I want to mention briefly two problems of policy which I believe to be paramount at this time.



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The first is the fact that our schools are not turning out a sufficient number of technically trained persons to supply the future needs of American industry.

A recent survey has shown that approximately three-fourths of American children now in high school must find jobs in industry if they work at all. Yet trade and industrial education comprises only 1/25th, or 4%, of our entire educational program. Obviously, our educational system is not facing up to realities.

Each year, 750,000 American youths leave high school. Three-quarters of them must enter industry, most of them with no training for it whatever. Dislocation, dissatisfaction, and inefficiency are inevitable. In many cases, high school graduates have actually acquired the belief that skilled labor is undesirable. Nothing could be further from the truth, for a skilled man is an educated man, in the true sense of the word.

I do not mean that we should detract from our liberal arts courses, but that we should add to them a more practical preparation for work. If we are to make happy citizens out of the 75% who must find jobs in industry, we must equip them to do those jobs.

The second problem of policy which I will mention briefly, is that American education must assume a more positive



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attitude toward the value of the democratic way of life, if our citizens are to withstand the pressure of foreign ideologies.

We must face the fact that totalitarian states such as Germany and Russia have made extensive use of education as a weapon in the war of ideas, and also that Americans have largely neglected it. Russia today spends 8% of her income on education, compared to our 2%. More important, she is training all her children in the positive conception that the total state is the best state.

In America we are growing somewhat lax in teaching our children to acquire a militant advocacy of the doctrine of free enterprise. We often fail to teach them the manner in which hard work coupled with personal freedom have given Americans the world's highest standard of living.

Our history books have been permitted to acquire a somewhat cynical and disillusioning attitude toward American heroes and American ideals and principles. Indeed, 72% of our colleges do not even require American history as a prerequisite for entrance, and a recent survey of 700,000 college students showed that 91% of the students were not taking American history courses.

Such a condition will not produce citizens who are fully equipped to withstand the powerful onslaught of ideas that are



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inimical to democratic principles.

To correct that condition, we must somehow charge our educational system with a more positive attitude toward the advantages of the American way as compared with that of the totalitarians. Otherwise we cannot hope to maintain the world leadership for human freedom which has fallen into our hands.